

Guiding Principles and Goals of the Primary Program

Philosophy

The Primary Program nurtures the continuing growth of children's knowledge and their understanding of selves and the world. It provides a safe, nurturing, and stimulating environment where learning flourishes. The program recognizes that children are individuals, and every child is unique. The program facilitates continuous learning by accommodating the broad range of children's needs, their learning rates and styles, and their knowledge, experiences, and interests. It presents an integrated curriculum, incorporating a variety of instructional models, strategies, and resources.



The program respects the development of the whole child. It reflects an understanding that children learn through active involvement and play and that children demonstrate and represent their knowledge in a variety of ways. It recognizes the social nature of learning and the essential role of language in mediating thought, communication, and learning.

The program views assessment and evaluation as integral components of the teaching-learning process. Assessment and evaluation support each child's learning and assist the teacher in making appropriate educational decisions.

The program values teachers and parents as partners in children's learning. Teachers and parents consult and collaborate to create a climate of respect, success, and joy necessary for lifelong learning.

Common Understandings

- **Experience, knowledge, curiosity, and sense of wonder are foundations for children's learning.**

The experiences and knowledge young children bring to school, combined with their natural curiosity and sense of wonder, is the foundation for learning in the primary years. The Primary Program is designed to help develop the potential of each child. It respects and values differences in children, building upon individual differences rather than stressing conformity. It provides opportunities for continuous learning without the restrictions created by fixed ability grouping of children or by retention and promotion practices. It allows for the fact that for each child learning occurs in different areas, at different times, and in different ways.

- **Children learn through active involvement and play.**

The program honors the development of the whole child. It reflects an understanding that children learn through active involvement and play and that children demonstrate their knowledge in a variety of ways.

- **The ideal learning environment provides time and opportunity for children to learn cooperatively and collaboratively.**

The primary learning environment provides time and opportunity for children to experience and respond creatively to their world. The learning environment is social in nature, providing a secure and stimulating climate for all children. It provides time and opportunity for children to take appropriate risks and to explore and investigate their world. Children have experiences which encourage them to interact with others, to develop interpersonal skills, and to work and learn cooperatively and collaboratively.

If children are excited, curious, resourceful, and confident about their ability to figure things out and eager to exchange opinions, with other adults and children, they are bound to go on learning, particularly when they are out of the classroom and throughout the rest of their lives.

Kamii, 1990

- **Assessment and evaluation are the basis for educational decisions, which support each child's learning.**

Evidence of what each child can do is collected frequently and used to make decisions about instruction and activities to meet learning needs. Assessment and evaluation are viewed as integral components of the teaching-learning process which support each child's learning; they assist the teacher in making appropriate educational decisions. The assessment and evaluation of each child's growth in learning is based on the goals of the primary program, not by comparison with other children. In this way, children are encouraged to improve their performance and realize their individual potential rather than to compete with others.

- **The young child learns to make sense of a complex world.**

Every child enters the world ready to learn, wanting to learn, and, in fact, needing to learn. The need for food and shelter is matched by a vital need to make sense of their surroundings. Imagine a world of the very young child, a complex world of sights, sounds, smells, tastes, and textures for which the child must find meaning. In a real sense, knowledge about this world is constructed by the child and with very little direct help from others.



- **Teachers and parents are valued partners in each child's education.**

The program values teachers and parents as partners in the child's education; they consult and collaborate to create a climate of respect, success, and joy. Parents are the most influential people in their children's lives. Children learn the language of the home and how language is used. They learn the attitudes and values that their parents have about learning. No wonder some educators have said that children accomplish the most complex learning of their lives before they ever come to school. And, they have done it largely by themselves on their own initiative. Clearly, learning is natural, and wanting to know and learn are basic human characteristics.

Goals of the Primary Program

The goals of the primary program are interrelated and of equal importance. They provide the foundation upon which the program is built. Foundation statements support each goal, the building blocks which educators use to plan experiences and acknowledge and honor the basic human need to learn.

